

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY NEWS



DEFENCE RESERVES SUPPORT COUNCIL

SUPPORTING AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE RESERVISTS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

IN THIS EDITION

BATTLING FLAMES AND
FLOODS ALL IN A DAY'S
WORK FOR EXECUTIVES

EMPLOYERS AWARDED FOR
SUPPORTING DEFENCE

EMPLOYER SUPPORT
PAYMENT CHANGES

MORE INFORMATION

www.defence.gov.au/drsc
Freecall 1800 803 485

ACT OFFICE

R8-G-009
Department of Defence
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: (02) 6265 3917
Email: act.drsc@defence.gov.au

BATTLING FLAMES AND FLOODS ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR EXECUTIVES

When managers tell their friends about fighting fires at work they normally don't mean it in the literal sense!

But this is exactly what a group of 30 senior executives from Canberra did when they joined the Defence Reserves Support Council's (DRSC) Exercise Executive Stretch.

The activity, coordinated by the ACT's DRSC Liaison Officer Major Rob Ball, saw the executives firefighting and 'saving' battle-damaged ships at the Royal Australian Navy's School of Survivability and Ships Safety (RANSSSS) at Jervis Bay.

The diverse group, which included the ACT's Chief Police Officer Audrey Fagan and Member of the ACT's Legislative Assembly Mrs Vicki Dunne, thoroughly enjoyed the exercise which aims to show employers the types of invaluable skills that can be gained through participation in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Reserves.

After flying to Navy training establishment aboard a Royal Australian Air Force No. 37 Squadron C-130J Hercules, the group listened intently to a series of safety presentations before heading out to HMAS COUNTERSINK, the school's ship simulator.

Fully kitted out in anti-flash, gum boots and overalls, the group successfully mended ruptured pipes and attempted to hold back the gushing water that flooded each and every compartment of the ship.

In the afternoon, the group donned fire protection gear, gas masks and oxygen tanks to battle flames in two adjacent simulators.

Ms Caroline Lemezina of the Housing Industry Association said the exercise had given her a better appreciation of the difficult situations that can face Navy personnel when they are at sea.

"You often see people in uniform and think they are there if something really bad happens but you don't necessarily have an appreciation for what can go wrong while they are performing their duties," said Ms Lemezina.



Stemming the flow

"During the simulations we have seen some of the things that can go wrong and how important team work is in the Defence Force.

"This exercise has shown me that you have to be a special type of person to be in the Defence Force."

Ms Lemezina said she worked closely with a Reservist who had recently returned from six month's service in East Timor.

"He talks about his experiences very fondly and this exercise has shown me that it is important for us to continue to be supportive of our Reservists," she said.

"I think I can now talk with more confidence about what the Defence Force does and I would certainly encourage young people to consider joining the Reserves."



The group after successfully completing the COUNTERSINK exercise



EMPLOYERS AWARDED FOR SUPPORTING DEFENCE

A major car manufacturer, a newspaper, two universities and a law firm have been recognised for their significant support of Defence Reserve personnel at a special ceremony held at The Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



The award winners (L-R): Mr Warren Snell of Edith Cowan University, Mr Chris Faulkner of the Barrier Daily Truth newspaper, The Hon. Teresa Gambaro, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Professor Peter Flood, of The University of New England and Mr Tom Phillips of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited.

Mitsubishi Motors, The Barrier Truth newspaper in Broken Hill, University of New England in Armidale, Edith Cowan University and Chalmers & Partners, both in Perth, were announced as the winners of this year's Defence Reserves Support Council (DRSC) National Employer Support Awards.

The ceremony, organised by DRSC, acknowledges employers who have supported their Reserve employees with leave arrangements and other special considerations necessary for them to fulfil their Defence obligations.

The University of New England and Edith Cowan University were recognised in the Government category. The universities employ several staff who are Reservists and also have 100 students between them who are enrolled as active members of the Defence Reserves. Both universities have excellent, supportive leave guidelines and regularly promote the Defence Reserves within their organisations.

Chalmers & Partners, Solicitors and Barristers, was presented with the Small Business category award. This business won the 2004 WA Employer Support Award and has a generous leave policy for their Reservists.

The Barrier Truth newspaper in Broken Hill won the Medium Business category. The newspaper actively promotes and publicises the work of its local Army Reserve Unit and visits to the city by the Defence Force.

Mitsubishi Motors, based in Adelaide, South Australia won the Large Business category. This organisation was honoured for its significant support of the Reserve, in particular, its decision to develop a specific leave policy for its Defence Reservists. Further, it was the first organisation in Australia to sign an on-line Statement of Support, confirming its commitment to Defence Reserves.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT PAYMENT CHANGES

By Deanna Nott

Significant changes have been made to the Defence Reserves Employer Support Payment (ESP) Scheme. The ESP scheme provides financial assistance to employers who release their employees for Reserve service. Payments are also available to self-employed Reservists after they meet additional eligibility criteria.

Director Employer Support Payment (ESP) Scheme Mr Doug Stedman said one of the main changes was that the annual qualifying period had been changed from 14 days to two weeks. "When service is undertaken in five-day blocks, generally from Monday to Friday, the qualifying period will be met after two periods of service," said Mr Stedman, who encouraged Reservists and their employers to read the new ESP brochure that is now available from unit Orderly Rooms.

"Changes have also been made to the circumstances when part days of service can be counted for ESP payments. Part days can now only be counted if used for travel or for authorised rest or stand-down." The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence recently authorised the changes that only apply to ESP claims for service commenced after 31 August 2005. Claims for service commenced before 1 September 2005 will continue to be assessed under the previous eligibility criteria. The ESP payment rate for the current financial year is \$991.20 per week. In certain cases, higher level payments may be made.

Several changes have also made to ESP for self-employed Reservists. Eligibility criteria of self-employed Reservists, in particular with regard to principal source of income, have been amended. For example, the principal source of income must relate to a specified period of at least six months before the relevant Reserve service, and if evidence is provided from a financial adviser or accountant, it must detail amounts of income and meet other criteria.

Deputy Head Reserve Policy Captain Peter Quirke said ESP had provided real benefits to Australian Defence Force capability by supporting Reservists' service on operational deployments, training exercises and courses, and in undertaking other Defence duties. For example, recent deployments of ADF medical specialists to Iraq and other operational areas would have been much more difficult without employer support payments to help hospitals cope with the absence of their Reservist doctors.

CAPT Quirke said a new Defence Instruction PERS 05-42 would be published detailing the new arrangements. New ESP claim forms have been promulgated.

Further information is available from ESP scheme staff on 1800 001 696 or by emailing esp@defence.gov.au



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